BOOK REVIEWS


Any book that runs to 15 editions must have something going for it, and certainly the Merck Manual fulfills the stipulated requirements set by the Editorial Board. This new edition is a compendium of all medical specialties and contains a vast amount of information which should appeal to all levels of medical practitioners and health workers. It is now over 2500 pages long and therefore rather too large to have in one's pocket, but at the same time costing only £13.95, it is exceedingly good value in these days of increasing expense.

My only criticism relates to the Clinical Pharmacology Section where, because the book is primarily for the American market, some of the trade names specified may create some confusion. Otherwise this book is heartily recommended and I would suspect that following editions will be of the same high standard, particularly the Centenary Edition due in 1999.

George Ratcliffe


The World Health Organization held a Summit Meeting of Ministers of Health in January 1988 at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in London. There were more than 100 Ministers of Health among the delegates, and most countries in the world were represented. This book is a report of that meeting.

On the whole, conference reports tend to be scrappy with good articles lost among the mundane. This book is an exception. Only speakers of the highest calibre were invited to contribute and the content of their papers was carefully co-ordinated in advance. The discussion throughout the Summit led to the London Declaration on AIDS Prevention which was adopted unanimously by the delegates at the end of the meeting.

The first of the opening addresses was given by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. It is interesting to be able to read the full text of her script so that her comments about “innocent victims” can be read in context rather than having to rely on the second-hand reports which appeared in the press at the time.

Next, Mr John Moore MP, the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, outlined the United Kingdom's strategy for AIDS prevention. He was followed by Dr Halfdan Mahler, the Director-General of the WHO, who set the Summit in the context of the Global Strategy of Health for All.

The main part of the meeting was split into five sections which considered AIDS as a global challenge, AIDS prevention through health promotion, health promotional programmes for specific groups, the role of counselling and the preparation of health workers for the AIDS challenge. It is impossible to summarise the discussion in a short review such as this. I would recommend that anyone considering this problem should read this book for themselves.

J T Graham


Rheumatic fever and its cardiac sequelae remain all too common in tropical countries, and fresh reports of epidemics in US Service recruits remind us further of its potential for causing serious disease. This report of the WHO Study Group which met in 1987 pulls neatly together the latest information on the epidemiology and prevention of rheumatic fever and it should be of value to all military physicians.

G O Cowan


This compilation of a series of excellent BMJ articles on all the normal ward-based practical procedures appears in a second edition in a handy format, and is strongly recommended for all junior hospital doctors to have available to read before embarking on such manoeuvres as liver biopsy, pleural biopsy, arterial puncture or paracentesis abdominis. It is only a pity that the lumbar puncturist on the cover has unrolled white coat sleeves, wears no mask, and is attacking the spine from the wrong angle!

G O Cowan